

# The PROPAGATOR

July, 2004

The Monthly Newsletter of South Orange Amateur Radio Association

## Geocaching Presentation

Monday evening, July 19, learn how to cash in on the cache Geocaching or Geo-Stashing as it is some times is called, is a blend of radio, orientation and treasure hunting. Like T-Hunting, Geocaching is international. Currently, Geocaching is enjoyed in more than 200 countries. Our featured Geocache speaker for July is Dino Darling, K6RIX.



Dino is President of both the Western Amateur Radio Association (W.A.R.A.) and Orange County Council of Amateur Radio Organizations, O.C.C.A.R.O. □

## New Members

A hearty welcome to SOARA's newest members:

Kriss Larson	KG6UOS
Cynthia Scord	KG6VQI
Greg Antonucci	KC6PCB
David Elder	KA6TBF
Jerrold Brickler	KG6VQK
Horst Zitzmann	KD7JHR
Pauline Zitzman	KD7JHS
Kareem Rashad	KG6USK
Matt Mendenhall	KE6ALM

## Another Great Field Day

Once again, SOARA held a great Field Day exercise, June 26 and 27, 2004. It all started with the, now traditional, Friday evening "Strategy and Planning" session. The picnic BBQ fare was great, and the session was very well attended. Thanks to Lou KG6FCT, and XYL Phyllis for making this happen.

In spite of a slightly late start on Saturday morning, the set up of the towers, antennas and other gear went exceptionally smoothly, and all major gear and components were in place, ready to operate nearly an hour before the 11:00 am, official start time! This is because of the significant number of dedicated SOARA members who arrived early and pitched in to get the event off to the right start. The same was true of take down. At a time when nearly everyone is exhausted, and patience can be wearing thin, never the less, the take down and clean up also went rapidly.

Operations were like a well oiled machine, with SOARA achieving one of our best score ever: 6750 points. Computer logging and networking by Phil, AD6NH, greatly enhanced our ability to accurately log and compile the contacts. We were competing in the 3A category: 3 primary HF transmitters, with emergency, noncommercial power. All stations did very well, and thanks to an unexpected opening, together with the persistence of AD6OI, and some others, the six meter band yielded an unusually high number of points.

The balloon supported, long-wire vertical antenna by Dave KG6QCI, Richard, K6RBS, and Brian NJ6N, helped out in our score totals. There are several humorous anecdotes surrounding The Balloon Project, so see Richard's article on page 2, and check the SOARA website for pictures and details. At first, it seemed all was lost in the balloon adventure when the first balloon unexpectedly self destructed while tethered in the standby mode. Fortunately, Brian NJ6N had a spare from previous years, and it was quickly sent

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## Picnic on Sunday, Aug. 1

SOARA's annual summer picnic will be held Sunday, August 1st, 2004 at the customary location: Dana Point Harbor, picnic area, often referred to as "Baby Beach". The gathering time will be about 11:00 am, with food being served about 1:00 PM. The fare will be the traditional hamburgers, hot dogs, salads, etc. SOARA will furnish the burgers, dogs, buns, condiments, and soft drinks. It would be very helpful if those attending could bring along a salad (potato, bean, fruit, green, etc.) or a picnic style desert such as cookies, brownies, or the like.



Talk in will be on the San Clemente Repeater: 146.025+ (110.9). Bring your family, your side dishes, appetites, lawn chairs, and be prepared for a great time! □

## SOARA COVERS THE FAIR

Every year the Orange County Council of Amateur Radio Organizations (OCCARO) has a booth in the County Pavilion of the Orange County Fair. All member clubs of OCCARO are asked to provide hams to staff this booth at some time during the run of the fair. SOARA's assignment was for Saturday and Sunday, July 10th and 11th, 10:00 am to 11:00 PM.

The OCCARO fair booth has special significance to several SOARA members, as this is where we first learned about SOARA, and the many services that our great club provides. This year the booth was especially well done and makes a great visual impression of which all OC hams can be proud. We believe that



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## The Way I See It: "Up in the Air Over an Antenna" The Field Day Balloon Saga.

By Richard SaundersK6RBS

Friday evening was our first chance to test balloon #3. If you haven't been following the saga, you may be wondering what happened to its predecessors #1 and #2. I purchased balloon #1 on eBay last year. This was my first eBay purchase of any kind and my wife became quite curious when I first told her that I was in the bidding. Her curiosity rapidly changed to incredulousness as I explained to her that the object of my bidding was a 4' weather balloon. Incredulousness is not a word that I would use on a regular basis but she insists that it best describes her attitude to our project.

So I'll get back to the fate of balloon #1. Following last year's Friday night test flight, our gas man Dave, KG6QCI, insisted that our balloon would be safe and cozy over night if we stuffed it into the back of his SUV. Unfortunately, Dave's plan did not take into account the actions of a certain coyote that decided to stray into the path of Dave's SUV as Dave (and balloon#1) were heading home. As Dave hit the brakes, the cylinder of helium that Dave was also transporting started to faithfully obey Newton's first law of motion (no Heiko, the tank wasn't wearing its seat belt). Within a fairly short period of time, the large gas cylinder found itself traveling at roughly 30 MPH with respect to the Dave's vehicle. Sadly balloon #1 was no match for 235 lbs of flying steel and with a dull pop, it was no more, Dave's voice temporarily rose a couple of octaves and the coyote went on to live another day.

Balloon #2 was provided by Brian NJ6N. It gave us excellent service last year supporting our 80' vertical (5/8 on 40M).

Incredulousness (yes... that word again) also describes Steve, KF6JVT's wife's attitude when she caught him boiling balloon #3 on their kitchen stove. Steve was not actually trying to make latex soup (or so he claims), instead he was just following the directions that came with his balloon that suggested it be boiled for 5 minutes before use to enhance its strength.

Now I've never been troubled by anything like balloon envy before, but I have to say, when Steve pulled his out of its bag, I was impressed. I mean, as balloons go, it was a whopper. Whereas mine and Brian's looked little more than large, anemic party balloons, Steve's was the real thing. He said it was capable of growing to 8 ft but looking at it, this monster could surely reach 12 ft when fully inflated.

We turned on the gas and after what seemed like an eternity (probably about 20 minutes), balloon #3 started to tug at its moorings, indicating that it was ready for action. A few final blasts of gas, attach the tether and the antenna and off she goes. There had been some concern that we might not have enough lift. As it turned out, we had more than enough lift. So much that we agreed that a second 60 lb fishing line tether would be needed when we used to the balloon for real on Saturday.

We hooked up the 132 ft of antenna wire, four 66 ft radials and a radio to Bob, W6LFO's, mighty tuner. Using just 15 watts, we received strong signal reports from everyone we called on 80m including Art Bell and his friends on the 3.840 MHz net.

Satisfied that our design was working well, people started to drift off home and get rested for the weekend ahead. We had already calculated that, because of the unexpected dimensions of balloon #3, we would have to find a way to store it inflated over night. Re-inflation was not an option since we'd already used more than half of the gas and our helium supplier was not open for business at the weekend. Those of us remaining now started to ponder the now imminent problem of "how does one transport and store an 8 ft latex bag filled with helium?"

One suggestion was to just leave it tethered — nobody would even see it — it was dark and the tether was almost invisible. The problem with this idea was that we were concerned that a single tether would not be enough and we had no idea how the balloon would behave should there be a significant increase in wind speed before morning.

A second suggestion was to store the beast under the picnic area roof. This idea sounded promising but we were concerned that the local hooligans (do they have hooligans in Mission Viejo?) might find it and either burst our bubble or give it its freedom.

A third idea was to stuff it into Brian's SUV. Given its size and the fate of its predecessor, this suggestion was dismissed in favor of idea #4.

The forth, and silliest, idea was to pad the bed of my pickup truck with sleeping bags, sit the balloon on the bed, cover it up with a tarp and transport it to my house for the night. So how many hams do you think it takes to gift wrap an 8' jelly fish that is determined to escape, strap it to a truck and transport it 5 or so miles? The answer is 5. The balloon made 3 bids for freedom on its way down La Paz road but after an hour or so the slow moving convoy of 5 vehicles, including one with an 8' undulating blue mushroom, all with lights flashing, made it to the K6RBS QTH.

Once home I took my wife outside to show her our achievement. Incredulousness... yes... you guessed it... plenty of incredulousness as well as loud laughter to the point of tears.

Tony, AE6QT, followed me back to the site on Saturday morning. The OC sheriff that passed us on La Paz paid little attention to our cargo which we delivered safely and still inflated, back to the site.

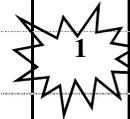
I have to report that despite our valiant efforts, balloon #3 never got to fly again. Maybe Steve should have used more salt when he boiled it, or maybe we'll never know why balloon #3 decided to spontaneously burst several hours before our planned launch time.

Once again, Brian and balloon #2 came to our rescue. We had ample remaining helium to fully inflate it and, with the help of a 32 ft fiber glass pole loaned by Heiko, AD6OI, our 80 meter  $\frac{1}{2}\lambda$  was ready to go an hour or so before dusk.

By all accounts it performed magnificently. I used it on phone Saturday evening and while noisier than the dipole, East Coast signals were up to 4 S points (24 dB!) stronger on the vertical. Dana, K6NR, employed it on 80m CW for the night shift and reported that it worked very well to the East Coast. He had no problems being heard by everyone that he called.

Once the sun came up, 80m faded out so we reduced the overall length of the antenna down to roughly 80 ft and we used it as a  $\frac{5}{8}\lambda$  on 40M for the final hour or so of the contest. K6RBS

Year 2004	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
General Meeting 7:00 PM	26	23	15	19	17	21	19	16	20	18	15	No meeting
Program	WB6NOA	W6XD	K0OV		Auction	FD prep	K6RIX				Auction	
VEC Testing	26	23	15	19	17	26	19	16	20	18	15	—
SOARA T-Hunt			7	4	2	6	11	1	5	3	7	5
Propagator Deadline	18	15	7	11	9	13	11	8	12	10	7	
Board Meeting	2/2	3/1	22	26	24	28	26	23	27	25	22	
ARRL Field Day						26/27						
SOARA picnic												
SOARA Holiday Party												5



Picnic on Sunday

### Field Day *continued from page 1*

aloft.

Testing was conducted, by Lou, KA6BJO, who along with Muriel, KA6BJP, drove in from Palm Desert to run the session. Several new hams were successful, as well as some others upgrading. The Membership Committee had an excellent display booth and greeting table and they enrolled several

new members for the club. Thanks to Jim

K6EEE, and his team of Robin KG6MCA, Jeremy, KG6JAD, Lou KG6FCT, and others who staffed the booth.

A definite highlight of the FD exercise was a visit from the Mayor of the City of Mission Viejo, Gail Reavis, on Sunday morning. Mayor Reavis even took some time to operate HF on the GOTA station. We definitely appreciate the support of the Mayor, and the City of Mission Viejo.

Once again SOARA demonstrated that they are ready and able to provide long and short range disaster communications for our South County communities, when needed. Thanks again to the coordinator, Jim, K6VDH, and everyone else who came by and helped out. Stand by for news of our place in the competition, usually found in the October edition of QST.

Ray, AE6H



### SOARA at the Fair *continued from p. 1*

this booth is a great way for new and existing hams to learn about Ham Radio and the various clubs serving Orange County.

Thanks to the dedication of Alan WB6T, Robin KG6MCA, Jeremy KG6JAD, Jim K6LIO, Lee KD6QAX, Jim KB6OUM, Tony AD6QT, Bruce K6HRU, Heiko AD6OI, Patty AD6OH, Brian, NJ6N, and Jerrod KG6VQK, we were able to provide the coverage to this excellent and award winning display for Amateur Radio. de AE6H

**Q.** Where'd amateur radio operators get the "ham" nickname?

**A.** From the initials of a magazine called Home Amateur Mechanic. It devoted an entire issue to radio assembly in 1912.

*From L. M. Boyd's TRIVIA column in the O. C. Register, July 10, 2004.*

### T-Hunt Update

Since the start, earlier this year, of SOARA's monthly T-hunt, its popularity has grown. The hunts are generally held on the first Sunday of the month. July was an exception because that Sunday fell on the 4th. The July hunt was moved to the second Sunday, June 11.

In August the first Sunday is the date for SOARA's Annual Picnic. Rather than change the date of the hunt, the format will be changed slightly. The rules for a usual hunt stipulate that the hidden transmitter must be within the bounds of the county and south of the 55 freeway.

The August T-hunt will take place at the picnic site and the search area will be limited so that it can easily be conducted on foot. Richard, K6RBS, who has been quite successful in sniffing out hidden "T"s using only an HT, will offer some before-the-hunt advice to those who don't have

specialized equipment.

Everyone who wishes to give T-hunting a try will get a chance. You don't need a license for this aspect of amateur radio, so wives, youngsters and friends can participate. On one of the recent hunts Joe Lopez, W6BGR, with the help of his 9 year old son, Bronson, got to the hidden transmitter first.

Bring an HT along to the picnic and check out this fun game. Much of the equipment the hunters use is simple to build and the regular hunters will have equipment there to show and to demonstrate.

Results of the recent hunts found Richard, K6RBS, first to find the transmitter in June. Along with the honor of winning goes the task of selecting a devilishly clever spot for the next months hunt. Karl, KF6MDF, was first to find it in July, so he will be picking a spot in the vicinity of the picnic site.

———— Happy Hunting.

# The PROPAGATOR

South Orange Amateur Radio Association  
P.O. Box 2545  
Mission Viejo, CA 92690



## Meeting: July 19, 2004 at 7:00 PM K6RIX on Geocaching

☛ **SOARA** meets at the Mission Viejo Community Center, 26932 Veterans Way, Mission Viejo, the third Monday of every month at 7:00 PM. Changes to the meeting time or place are announced in this newsletter and on the 147.645 two-meter repeater.

☛ **License Exams:** Amateur License Exams are given prior to SOARA meetings. Exams are from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. Walk-in applicants are welcome. For information call Paul Levey, NZ1M, at 949-481-5454.

☛ **Contacting SOARA:** Questions about SOARA? Send e-mail to: [info@soara.org](mailto:info@soara.org), or leave a message at 949-249-1373.

☛ **Web Site:** SOARA maintains a web site with current club information. The URL is: <http://www.soara.org>.

☛ **Repeaters:** The SOARA 2-meter, 70 cm and 224.100 MHz repeaters are open to all licensed hams.

**SOARA** 2m — 147.645 – (110.9) Laguna Beach

**SOARA** 2m — 146.025 + (110.9) San Clemente

**SOARA** 2m — 145.240 – (110.9) Trabuco

**SOARA** 220 — 224.100 – (110.9) Laguna Beach

**SOARA** 440 — 445.660 – (110.9) Laguna Beach

The SOARA 220 and HROC 440 repeaters are shared by members of both clubs. Each machine is subject to the operating rules of its respective club. Call KG6GI for details.

**SOARA** 220 — 224.640 – (123.0) Santiago Pk. (C)

**HROC** 440 — 447.180 – (131.8) Santiago Pk. (C)

☛ **Nets:** SOARA 2 m repeater open net is held Tuesday 8:00 PM 40 meter HF net (7.250MHz +/- for QRM), Sunday 7:30 AM.

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